

Father Stefan Sandjakoski

SERMONS FROM KALISTA

Sermons from Kalista by father Stefan Sandjakoski is an unusual book and severe at the same time. It is a book of a great value, since it continues the permanent historical ison of the Macedonian sermonic genre from St. Clement of Ohrid till today. However, these sermons are a result of authentic sermonic poetics and practice. The homiletic speech of father Stefan Sandjakoski does not blindly follow the strict Byzantine form of sermons. He is closer to the pragmatic and emphatic rhetoric of St. John Chrysostomos. These sermons were spoken in the temple of the Holy Mother of God in Kalista, where father Stefan Sandjakoski used to serve a holy liturgy. Uttered thunderingly amidst the divine hesychia of the monastery on the side of the Ohrid Lake, they touch and wave the acute issues and dilemmas of modern man via the perspective of Godman Christ. Here, the superb intellectual endeavor is interwoven with a subtle tremor of heart. Therefore, the sermons by father Stefan Sandjakoski are not only a witness of the temptations of present time but a moving and sobering message to all historical eons, as well.

THE MAN AND THE WORLD

We are living in a miraculous world whose perfection has always perplexed man's mind. Its perfect functioning astounds famed scientists. The cosmos is a secret sealed with seven seals. With the effort of generations, the enigma of the world is being foretold, yet people are not able to touch the bottom of the mystery. Only an admiration before the secret lasts. The admiration before the cosmic beauty means standing in front of a painted icon that brings forward to the lively presence of the archetype – the Creator of life and world. However, there are philosophers whose perception of the relation between anthropology and cosmology is wrongly shaped. The old peoples from the Far East: Chinese, Hindu and Japanese, as well as the Old Helenes and Romans, treated man as an element or part of cosmos. Man has been one of numberless cosmic elements. Anthropology has been subjected to cosmology; that is to say, man has been subjected to the world. Accordingly, the miraculous and polysemous role of anthropology had been narrowed within the frames of cosmology. The Holy Bible, on the contrary, faces us with the opposite perspective. The man of positivistic and phenomenistic philosophy, faced with the biblical comprehension of the relation between anthropology and cosmology, blandly speaking, is being bewildered. We are referring to the exceptional role of man *vis à vis* the world. The world is created for the man, and man carries a great responsibility for the world. The salvation of the world depends on the salvation of man. Given the fact that man has not been created because of the world, man is not and cannot be an element of the world. God has created him as a microcosm in the cosmos - physically, and as a macrocosm *vis à vis* the cosmos - spiritually. In other words, brothers and sisters, God has put the world in the hands of man and - since then - he is responsible for its fate. What does that mean, my dears? It means that God will ask from the hands of man a world saved, embellished, and redeemed.

Man must not abuse the world; he must not demolish it on behalf of some progress of the technocratic society. If the world has been created to become a home and ornament of man, according to the exact meaning of the Greek word **κοσμος**, then it is certain that the teachings of the Holy Bible about man as *homo adorans* (man priest) defines the cosmos as a temple of the first priest – Adam. In the temple of cosmos, the man - priest was living liturgically, that is to say worshipping God, offering gratitude prayers and praising the Holy Three, the Creator of man and world.

Obviously, by nature, man is a worshipping being. That is why whatever God has created - has created in order to put it into service to man's life. Thus, for instance, God has not blessed the food solely for biological contentment of man, solely for survival. Instead, he has created the food to put it into function of the spiritual life and its eternal significance. Let us start with the wheat. God has created the wheat in order to be milled and changed into flour from which bread is kneaded. Eating the bread, we maintain the body. However, the more profound meaning of bread is not in satiating us; it is rather in its transfiguring into a supernatural one, i. e. the body of the Savior. The holy Church is his body and he is her head. She is the bride and he is the bridegroom. God has blessed the fruit of vineyards, the grapes, not only to quench our thirst and to feed us, but to transfigure the wine made of grapes into the blood of the Theanthrope, into his redeeming blood shed on the cross for the salvation of man and for the life of the world. Whatever food we eat, it bears a deeper meaning. Without this mystic meaning, the food creates an image of man as being one of the many unreasonable beasts. Seized by death, the unreasonable man will be laid in the wombs of the earth. He will disappear in the dark and cold wombs of the earth becoming dust. Such an existence is absurd. People who come to that conclusion lose the meaning of life due to lack of faith. Hence, lacking strength to continue with life, they commit a suicide.

Today, the eyes of the Savior saw the short tax collector Zacchaeus. When he has heard that Christ would come to Jericho, he wished to see him. But he was short. That is why he climbed a tree. (The tree is known as a sycamore, since it is grafted by crossing of a fig and a mulberry tree. The tree that Zacchaeus climbed still exists in Jericho. God blessed me to see that tree on my pilgrimage to Palestine). Christ knew beforehand the need of Zacchaeus to make an active and close communication with God. That is why he said to him: “Hurry down, Zacchaeus, because I must stay in your house today”. He was a tax collector, and tax collectors had a bad reputation among the people. He climbed down at once and accepted him with happiness. However, people thought that Christ’s decision to visit his home was wrong. Zacchaeus was willing to give half of his belongings to the poor and if he had cheated anyone to pay back four times as such. Christ said to him: “Salvation has come to this house today, for this man also is a descendant of Abraham”. The Son of man came to seek and save the lost. Such a behavior is consoling for us, my beloved. Christ does not divide people on any bases. For Christ all people are equal and he loves them equally. He died for the salvation of all people and for the life of the world. Therefore, comprehend that Christ’s logic is beyond any logic! He does not build his relations with each person individually according to the man’s logic captured by prejudices. Christ is the very divine love that embraces whoever struggles to see him with a spiritual eye, to worship him and to co-dwell with him in the heavenly kingdom.

Amen.

ON ENVY

*Christ is born – Indeed is born
Christ is born – Indeed is born
Christ is born – Indeed is born*

After our Christmas sermons, we develop the topic of the Holy Gospel read today. We have mentioned that while the holy family was staying in

Egypt together with the newborn, Herod, the king of Jews, gave orders to kill all the boys who were two years old and younger. He was hoping that with a brutal slaughter of innocent children he would also slay the child that he had been afraid of so much. Our sermon will analyze the spiritual aspect of the motif that compelled Herod to kill 14,000 as pure as a tear lives. The newborn from Bethlehem, by the providence of God, spent the time of monstrous terror in a foreign country – Egypt. Motif for the beastly slaughter was the news that Herod heard from the three magi. They traveled following the star from East. It led them to Bethlehem, where they were headed to worship the newborn king of the Jews. Herod thought that in Bethlehem a new, earthly, secular king would be born who would take over his royal throne. Fearing the royal seat, hungry and greedy for power, he activated the mechanisms of lust. He craved for power and despotism like mad. Despotism as a royal power and a privilege became his reflex. He was poisoned by the habit to rule vigorously not preferably with territories and earthly goods as much as and above all with human souls. He was struck by the possibility to lose all that. Fear and envy towards the one who – as he heard - was going to be born as a king, sharpened his evil claws. Would he allow somebody to be born and to drive him out of the world? He was not able to live out of the world. Yet, my dears, is such a question reasonable? Herod did not know that a true king was born in Bethlehem. A true king and lord of the world and life was born, but as a humble servant of men, as the last among men, as a man with no interest in the earthly kingdom – the world of Herod. The lord of eternal kingdom was born; king of the kingdom of God, the everlasting country of men. He was born and entered the world to make Herod a holy inhabitant of the heavenly fatherland. If Herod had only known that, he would not have attempted to kill the newborn baby – the pre-eternal God. Herod carries the syndrome of envy. Envy is an illness of the spirit and it is based on the fear due to the existence of a man with better qualities than the ill one. He is one step to Judas, who carries the

syndrome of betrayal, that is to say, the syndrome of fratricide. This theme is embodied in the old biblical history of Cain and Abel. The theme is very significant for all of us since brothers who are not afflicted by this illness are very rare. We envy each other. Our municipality is daunted of the fact that envy is becoming epidemic. It blossomed and squeezed out love. We confront each other. Indeed, anywise love vanishes, anywise love fades, confidence among men fades too, and envy appears and reigns. Envy defines the rules of living in the wider society, in our municipality, in the villages, and in the families. The same as a festering wound overripes, breaches and infects a healthy tissue, envy destroys the tissue of the spiritual organism. Moreover, envy is a reason for further passions. It is sad that many Herods are being whelped in the church community. Depersonalized by the crowd, we live according to the law of hatred towards our brother. We lack a will to see him in good. We do not want to see bold men of spirit, captured by the Holy Spirit and firmly founded on the apostolic faith. We loathe men who raise our nation. Furthermore, in the holy men of the Church we want to recognize masters with same manners as the secular ones. The parish forsakes its spiritual trait and transforms into a geographical and administrative territory, which is later put into somebody's pocket. The bishop appropriates the grace of God and forgets that it is mortal to transform it into a personal property. The grace of God is a catholic (common) property of all members of the Church of God. It is true that God - through the bishop - gives it to each person according to the needs. The bishop is a good governor of the Church of God. However, the reality mirrors distorted spiritual conditions. What is the reason for distorted interpersonal relations in the world and in the Church? Our sermon could not analyze the numerous factors of disintegration. We will abstract the reason only through the Gospel's theme: the infernal illness named envy. Out of envy emerges hatred and alienation among men. We lose the memory of God and blessed remembrance of death. We live as beings immortal by

nature. We quest for the elixir of immortality and lead a life attached to the cosmos with a navel string. We do not want to be born. In the egg of this world, we feel safe and comfortable. As if we were married with the material enchantments. Evenly to our love towards them, we forget that death watches our step. But, we also forget that death is our best and greatest pedagogue of our real life in the Church. That is why Herod as a type of man stands in front of us and alerts us. He warns about the way we should not be. Let us not allow the sin of patricide and infanticide. Let us not give a kiss like Judas. Not to kill you with a kiss, my brother! Because the Lord Christ is our mutual father and savior, whose nativity we yearningly await and celebrate in the ages of ages.

Amen.

THEOLOGY IN COLOURS

With a humble mind and a pure heart, with modesty and purity of tamed body and soul, today we came and entered the happiness of triumphant victory of the holy Orthodoxy achieved on the Seventh Holy Ecumenical Synod in Nicaea in the year 787. The Orthodoxy won this glorious victory over heresy that aimed to destroy the holy icon and fresco, the holy arts, that is to say, to destroy the holy images of our Savior, Theotokos, apostles and all holy angels and people, inhabitants of the heavenly city of Jerusalem. Fighting the icons, they were struggling against fine arts in general. That task of the iconoclasts put the icon on a log, thus doubting Christologic and soteriologic dogma of Christian philosophy according to the Theanthrope Christ. Iconoclasts were destroying the very foundations of the apostolic faith. On the Holy Ecumenical Synod in Nicaea, besides the holy queen Irene, the brightest philosophers of the holy Church were present. Their God-inspired theology of the icon disgraced the

enemies of the holy icons. Today we cannot help mentioning the theology in colors of the great philosopher of the Church John of Damascus; the theology of the image of the great patriarch Nikiphoros of Constantinopolis, as well as the theology of the second father of monks of Byzantine, Theodore Studit, after the first one, Anthony the Great. In Nicaea, my dears, the heresy of the heresiarchs was defeated and the strictly didactic doctrine of Latin iconology was overcome. This victory is a victory of the artists. On the Ecumenical Synod, the thesis that the icon is not an idol was defended. Orthodox Christians venerate neither the wood, nor the color, nor the drawing. They honor and celebrate the holy persons and events presented on the plank with drawings and colors. The icon is a window towards eternity, profoundly has noticed the holy new martyr father Pavel Florensky. Via painted image, the icon leads us towards the archetype. The image leads us towards the archetype, towards the original. The iconostasis in the holy temples is ornamented with marvelous windows towards eternity. They breach the natural wall impenetrable for the eye of the body. Compared with the Orthodox ontology of the icon, the Latin understanding of the icon is unsatisfactory and inconsistent. For Roman Catholic iconologists, the icons have solely didactic meaning. According to Gregory the Great, the pope of Rome, the icons and frescos are an alphabet for the unlettered. In contrast to the iconologic opinion of the Latin fathers, the holy fathers of the Seventh Holy Ecumenical Synod in Nicaea, without questioning the didactic dimension of the icon, put it in a close relation to Christologic and soteriologic dogma. The dogmatic dimension of the icon was strongly defended by the fathers of the Synod. Responding to the accusations for idolatry, the holy fathers of the Synods proposed dogmatic terms, differing reverence of icons from worshiping of God. For that purpose, the following dogmatic terms were adopted: **λατρεία** (worshiping) referring to God and **τιμητικη προσκυνισις** (pious bow) referring to icons. According to our

faith, the real worshipping suits only to the divine nature and persons. God makes miracles, not the plank and colors.

The spiritual life of Orthodox Christians cannot be imagined without holy icons. Our families weakened spiritually and lost their souls when they remained without icons and icon lamps. We will compare the function of icons and icon lamps in the lives of our families with the function of the soul in the life of the body. The same as the body surrenders to death when the soul leaves the body, our homes become mortuary when left without holy icons and icon lamps. Theotokos and all the saints are intercessors of our families before God. Brightened and warmed by the light of the icon lamp that glistens in front of the icon, we remember that we should stand with our images before the image of God and to glitter with pure hearts and souls like an icon lamp. Let us glow before God's image, burnt by the fire of the Holy Spirit evenly to the power of our prayer, like Moses at the Mount Sinai. Let us start a dialog with our real savior – Holy Three God and to pray future and everlasting perspectives of the world we are living in.

Amen.

THE DEATH OF THE DEATH

Be blessed you that have come today, not sparing yourselves and not grieving for the time of your life. Come to venerate the holy honorable and life-giving Cross of Our Lord. Today's holyday is solemnly celebrated by the Holy Church. Today we have all stood before the holy honorable and life-giving Cross and we have joyfully sung: "To Your Cross we bow Master and Your Holy Resurrection we glorify". As you can see, brothers and sisters, The Cross and The Resurrection are inseparable, as there is no resurrection without death. Christ did not die on the Cross as men do not die in death; instead death died in the death of Christ, just as the sin dies in the death of man. Therefore, the Cross is the undefeated weapon in the arms of

the Christians. It has been given to us as a symbol of the victory and peace. According to the singing of one liturgical hymn, it is through the Cross that joy has come to the world. And it is that joy that has gathered us all here today.

But our unspeakable joy, beloved, is not without profound grief. It did not stay untouched on this very day. It is incomplete, as it is a wretched, martyr. Today, the Cross on which the death had been defeated, the sign and the symbol of the world peace in Orthodox Macedonia, has been replaced with the heathen fire imported from Vatican. Today we have the impression that we have denied the Cross of our Lord and we have turned to the fire that had burnt the bodies of the Christian martyrs in the Roman Coliseum. Does this mean that the madness came over the Roman patriarch - the Pope? Did he deny the Cross and did he accept the pagan logic of thinking, so typical of anthropolatric cultures and civilizations? Do we regress to the exotic sorceries of Egypt, Iran or the ancient Greece, or do we descend to the modern neo-pagan cults and rituals, growing like mushrooms after rain? Rejecting the Cross of our Lord, we join and we reduce ourselves to the logic of the secular world, to the civil world. That logic is the logic of the French Count Pierre de Coubertin, the soot of the West European Masonic Lodges. He affirms and deifies it identically with the ancient Helada, in which the Olympic games were organized in the honor of the supreme god Zeus. The same cult was observed in Rome in honor of Jupiter and August, the Roman Caesar. And today again, the pope is sending us the very same fire in Skopje, Ohrid and Struga, causing torment and misfortune, and calling for open presence of our hierarchs in the cult of the fire. Further, it will return to him in Rome. In *The Great Inquisitor*, Dostoyevski reveals the riddle of the Pope. He, *the vicarious Christi* says to this world there is no room for both of them: "You or I."

And have we, the sightless, rootless, and Godless, accepted such pagan logic, believing that the fire and the power of the one that is sending the fire

to us is the one who is going to save our Macedonia! Oh what a delusion, my beloved! Christ and His Cross are going to save us all. Without Him and His Cross we are nothing. And it is absurd to exist even than when we exist. I beg You, my beloved, do not participate in the pagan cult. Do not participate in the celebration of the great delusion of one man with an appetite to overwhelm us and separate us from Christ, our God. Macedonia is the unique Orthodox country that has accepted the magic of the fire.

Not a single local Orthodox Church has allowed the fire to pass through the Holy Orthodox lands. Remaining alone, let us think what is happening to us. Do we jeopardize our destiny? Let us show virtue and virility, to become worthy of calling Christ our Lord. According the criterion of our dignity, Christ will stretch himself as a blessed cover to protect us from all evil: the troubles, the threats, and the threats of the mighties of this world. God, do not forget, shows His power in our weakness.

Amen.

BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS FROM THE DESERT

With the blessing from God and according to His Love, the Ark of the Church sailed into the fifth week of the Great Paschal Lent. The Holy Church of Christ dedicates this week to the unusual holy woman, the venerable Mary of Egypt. She was a woman educated and enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Her hagiography recounts that she spent the holy part of her life as a hermit in the heart of the Sahara desert. The life of the venerable Mary of Egypt enriches us with abundant advice for our spiritual life and for our historical existence in this world.

Apart from the hagiography of the venerable Mary of Egypt, the Holy Scripture gives us an impulse for new spiritual life and for new way of existence. The fifth week of the Great Lent, as well as the hagiography of

our venerable Egyptian mother Mary, present us with conclusions about life as well as with invaluable life experiences without which we would be weakened to the level of helpless beings incapable of continuing their historical pace.

The Gospel that we have read today told us about a sinful woman who came to the house of the Pharisee, and it completely matches the life of venerable Mary of Egypt. The woman in the Gospel brought an alabaster jar with perfume, and began weeping at Christ's feet, wetting them with tears. Then she wiped them with her own hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the perfume. Simon, the host of the house and the disciple of Christ, doubted his teacher, as the whole town knew what kind of sinner was she. The Heart-knower told Simon the parable about the two men who owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed the moneylender 500 coins and the other 50. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts to both of them. Simon was asked which of them would love the master more. Simon replied correctly, saying: "The one who had the bigger debt." Then Christ turned towards the sinner and said to Simon: "Do you see this woman? I come into your house, you did not give me any water for my feet, yet she wet my feet with her tears. You did not anoint my head with oil, while she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven - for she loved me much; but who has been forgiven little - loves little." Then He said to the woman: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Also venerable Mary of Egypt, before she isolated herself in the Sahara desert, lived in Alexandria. She succumbed to the demons of debauchery. Her life was a life of a prostitute. The lives of these two women who we are talking about today, completely coincide. Hence, Christ's words to Simon about the sinful woman fully account for Mary - the great repentant of Egypt. The venerable Mary of Egypt had her conscience awakened about the decay of her character and about the deprivation of her personality. This

icon of God was initially deformed by debauchery and by her slavery to the sin: she denied her previous man and her previous life. *Salto mortale* happened to her mind in her heart. She recognized the real God incarnate in the Holy Three and herself in Him and from Him. Renewed, enlightened and reborn in a new life, Mary recognized and took Communion with the true meaning of the life – Christ, our God. Having decided to distant herself from the city, from the urban desert, and to settle in the heart of the natural desert, she become the dweller of the anti-city -- the cruel Sahara. She settled among these arid and lifeless desert sands, without food, without clothes, exposed to severe heat during the day and unbearable cold at night, whipped by the desert winds amidst the dust of the sandy dunes. She was completely dedicated to God, as a man who firmly decided to save the rest of his life. Resolved in her prayer and fasting in penance, she dedicated herself to God. She adorned herself with incredible humbleness. She burnt her passionate body in the sacred fire of the Holy Spirit, and she regained the blamelessness and the chastity of her body and her soul. With the Spirit, she cleansed and enlightened the sin-blurred instruments for recognition of the truth: the heart, the mind, the eyes, the mouth, and the nose. Mary -- the holy woman cleansed of passions, has turned to an everlasting icon lamp of The Holy Spirit. She was bestowed by the angel of God to receive Holy Communion with the body and blood of Christ. Thus, in the desert, she was kneading her body for prosphora, to transcend into the body of the Savior, as she was transforming her blood into the wine, into the very blood of Christ. She was receiving the Holy Communion from the angel's hand, alone with God in the desert. Yet, she needed to confirm that she was a catholic being, created for life in communion with God and the neighbors, in communion with the living and particular persons, i.e. in the Church of God, gathered around Christ: she was blessed to meet the Elder Zosima, one of the greatest spiritual fathers, serving as a monk Egypt. So also the Elder Zosima was blessed by God to find this life-giving source and beautiful flower of the

desert, the venerable Mary of Egypt, and to give her the Holy Communion of the Holy and Life-giving Gifts, of the Body and the Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. My beloved, she didn't wear clothes. She was completely naked before God, as she had achieved the purity and the passionlessness of the fore parents Adam and Eve before the fall. Man hides his sinful and mortal impurity under the woven garment, and often under the skin of his own body. To uncover the impure means to reveal the impurity, and to uncover the pure means to reveal the purity before God and the people. The naked, into their blameless and passionless life, are not hurt by the eyes of the lascivious and the passionate. The humbleness of these blessed nudes stems from "being taken insane for the sake of Christ." Such an understanding of man's freedom joyfully falls down before the one who is not free, but he himself is the freedom itself. Christians, clergy and monks are vowed to live in such humbleness. The Christians, the presbyters and the monks whose minds are infected with pride betray God and his call, for they consider themselves higher than the others. Do not forget that we all live in a desert. My beloved, this world remains as a more brutal desert than the desert in which the venerable Mary of Egypt lived. So, let us with one soul and one mind to call the all-merciful and man-loving God and our Savior Lord Jesus Christ to send us the life-giving and all-holy Spirit, to sanctify us and to enlighten us, to shine in our inner darkness and to water our own desert, raising us to Him in service and to His glory, in all humbleness, according to the example of our venerable mother Mary of Egypt.

Amen.

THE EYE OF THE SPIRIT

Christ has risen – Indeed has risen
Christ has risen – Indeed has risen
Christ has risen – Indeed has risen

By the mercy of God, with a Pesach joy, we are passing the sixth week of the great Pentecost. On this day, the Church of God faces us with the life story of a magnificent Gospel's hero – the man who was born blind. His destiny is a destiny that everyone can identify with.

This man, blind since birth, was not able to see the daylight, the wonderful colors and the splendid beauty with which God has ornamented the created world. However, what he was lacking was but one of many organs of the body. His physical lack had been compensated with something he had inside him. Deeply inside him, he had the bright eye of faith. The eye of spirit enabled him to taste the faith. He knew that he existed in the glory of the living Holy Three God. Christ heard, saw and blessed his hope, his infinite love and his existential expectation of the living God. He blessed him so that he gave back what was taken by birth – the eye of the body.

My beloved brothers and sisters, when Christ, by the power of his divine logos, with a spittle made mud and rubbed the man's eyes, seeing came back to the blind in the glory of the Holy Three God. The miracle captured the hearts of the witnesses of this wonderful Gospel's event. Yet, a polemic began. Questions were asked in the domain of man's logic. Was the man blind because of his own or his parents' sins? Was it happening by analogy to the Gospel's parable of fathers who eat sour grapes and whose children have spoiled teeth? This has a power to alarm us parents and to make us ponder about our responsibility towards our children. In the case of the blind man neither of the two questions were adequate. A paradoxical alternative comes to pass. Let us hear the unexpected answer. The blind man was such neither for his parents' sins nor for his own, but for the power of the living Holy Three God to be shown upon him and all generations to celebrate God together with the blind. Since, do not forget, what we have not seen, we heard today. Listen then, if you have ears! What does it mean to listen, my dears? It means that we should accept by our whole heart and to apply in our life the words we heard; that is to say, the logos of the

Gospel should become our life the same as the faith of the blind had accepted the Savior and life-giver beforehand. Therefore, my pious Christians, let us consider the example of the blind, let us lead a life with an unshaken faith, with an unselfish love and unbreakable hope. The eye of the body itself does not necessarily mean anything. Most of the people have eyes, but are not able to see. They are blind for God and the dangers of the world. Opposite to this people, there are blind men who have sharp eye of spirit. They see clearly and profoundly in the spiritual world. Spiritually blind man could not see what clairvoyants without eyes see. May the merciful and philanthropic God lighten and illuminate our spiritual and our physical eyes. May he present us with the gift of the graceful uncreated energies of God so as till the end to bless and enlighten our spiritual eye. For the eye is an important gnoseological instrument for recognizing the truth. Evenly to its sanctification, let us behold the secret of Godman Christ.

Amen.

THE WORD IS OUR FOOD

Christ is Risen-Indeed He is Risen

Christ is Risen-Indeed He is Risen

Christ is Risen-Indeed He is Risen

Today, my beloved in Christ, we bear witness of another wonderful annunciation. We have heard the joyous news of the praying dialogue that Theanthropic Christ, the second hypostasis of God, has initiated with His Father, the first hypostasis of the Three-in-One God. The whole dialogue represents an intimate, praying acumen into the essence of the love of the Holy Tree and into the interrelations between the hypostasis of the Father and of the Son. Hence, every word enunciated from the theanthropic Christ is directed to God the Father - words worthy of a never-sleeping eye and profound exegetic feat.

We shall pause at an important phrase of Christ's. What is eternal life? It is a query before which every human heart and every human mouth is silenced. The language painfully wears the feeling into the word. Thus, let us hear what does Christ recommend us in a simple, yet perfect confession of the Son before the Father: an eternal life is to recognize You, and the One sent from You in the history of the world and humankind, incarnate Logos of Yours that became man, - Father, - the theanthropic Christ! Hereby, we are given to recognize the way of our existence in the immortal life. We find it useless to rely on intellectual speculations and on our too modest, almost worthless life experience. We will find support in the testimonies of the most holy souls in the Church of Christ, as they truly recognized Christ and the way to His recognition. The words of the great Old Testament prophet Ezekiel come to mind: a man whom the God offered the scroll and commanded to take it and eat it. Once Ezekiel had tasted the scroll, it became sweeter than honey. It turned sweeter than honey, because he had accepted it and transformed the word of God into life; the word of the salvation written in the scroll of the Holy Scripture. The Scripture was received with faith and through the metabolism of the body and the spirit it was delivered to every cell of his body. Nourished by the Scripture, the prophet ate and drank from God. The second saying is the confession of another great Old Testament prophet, the virtuous Isaiah, who, according to the prophet Ezekiel, reached eternal life by the virtue of his lips. One of the Seraphims had offered him to kiss a coal transformed in fire. After he had kissed the ember with his own lips, the prophet was purified from his sins and he himself turned to fire. That fire is the divine fire of the Holy Spirit, whose power opens our minds to understand the word of the Scripture. We will celebrate the descending of the Holy Spirit in few days. These were the sayings of the great Old Testament prophets that by St. John the Chrysostom rightly called the Evangelists of the Old Testament. And, what does the Church of God and its millennia-long experience tell us? They are telling us

the thing we sing during every Holy Liturgy: to come, to receive and to taste our Good Lord. By tasting Him, we come to see that He is a meek Lord, as the prophet Ezekiel saw: after he had eaten the scroll of the Holy Scripture, he became convinced that it was sweeter than honey. Similarly, as the prophet Isaiah had reached the divine fire of the Holy Scripture with his lips and himself became the fire. Thus, on every Holy Liturgy, the priest calls the people to draw near, to approach with faith and love, and with their own lips to reach Christ – the ember. In the light of that, Christianity is the true philosophy of life that triumphs over every civil philosophy. The sterility of intellectual speculations is alien to the Christian philosophy. The results of the life-giving and dynamic experience of the faith are its argument. The argument is contained in the call: “come and receive Him, and receiving Him taste Him, and tasting Him feed yourself with Him, and feeding yourself with Him, transform yourself into Him, without losing your personality!”

Amen.

FOR THE JUDAS – CALLED PEOPLE

Let it be praised and blessed the all-holy memory of The Holy Three, the holyday of the descending of the Holy Spirit on the holy disciples and the birthday of the only, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ. On this date, God’s Church was born. On the day of Ascension, Christ comforted his disciples with the promise to send the all-holy and life-giving Spirit. Ten days later, in Jerusalem, on this day, the third hypostasis of the Holy Three, The Holy Spirit came to the apostles in such a shape that clouded their minds, so they could not understand the One that they had with their own eyes seen and with their own ears heard.

Today the apostles became bishops and the Church was born. Today Christ, The Arch priest in the order of Melchizedech, was completely

recognized. His theanthropic secret was enlightened and shone as a golden icon of the theophany and the words of the Gospel. And only because of this prophecy of performing the sacraments of God and because of the gift of glasolalia, the apostles started to glorify the Savior, their beloved Rabbi, the God-man Christ. They ascribed glory to Him in all languages throughout that former Greco-Roman world, from the day when the Logos of God incarnate and became a man, and was born from the Virgin Mary for salvation of the man and the world. Christ has remained a stumbling block for all ones who could not, and did not, have strength to recognize Him, our real God. They could not accept the criteria of our salvation in our lives established by Him. Thus they started arrogantly and God –fightingly to plant their persons and ideas as messiahs and superiors. Untroubled, the followers of secular religions reach the level of crucification, killing and burying Him again and again hoping to harm the One whose meekness and tranquility bothers them. I am talking about the syndrome of Judas, passed genetically in a certain part of the human population in the course of time.

Even today there are people who sell Christ for thirty silver coins. There are such who sell His truth, His justice, and His peace. The money transfer is made initially in the hearts of the Juda-like people, and then they arrogantly spread it to disgraceful stalls of the European and the world markets. They are possessed by demons and breathe the infernal air of death. The new Babylon presents proper pandemonium and pantheon with cast idols. Again and again, Christ gets crucified for us and for our salvation. We also get co-crucified every time we unconditionally love Him. The world's policemen are our executioners. They put us on the Cross as they had put Him. They are going to kill us, because we are sacrificing ourselves to God. The price for the death of the Christians would be: money, power and glory. The “deificators” of the state and the people, the European Union, or the New World Order and the new age, consider us Christians as a heap of rubbish, as nothing. They do so whenever overwhelmed by their

short memory or when galloping amnesia throws them out into the ghastly waste of a world without Christ.

Therefore my beloved, let us remember the touching contents of St. Basil's prayers which we read today. Let them teach us, here gathered in prayer, in meekness and peace to bear the God-blessed Cross. And let us with our whole lives and without exception, sing glory to Him -- our living God in all eternity.

Amen.

THE FREEDOM OF PERSONALITY

Holy Gospel read today explains unsurpassably the mystery of the basic existentiinal issue- the freedom of personality. The Bible's explication of freedom, as a gift from God, is not drown in the anthropocentric - from the sin and the death contaminated - waters of the american phraseology for freedom and human rights, personified in the typically violent and imperial floscule: "stick or carrot". The Bible's theology does not understand any real freedom which bows not before God. We heard today from the Holy Gospel how did Christ chose the apostles, His holy disciples. The way He made the choice and the call, represents a typical expresion of the Gospel's understanding of the freedom of personality. We heard that He approached Piter and Andrew, James and John, with the words: If you please, follow me. - "If you please" is a result of the deepest understanding of the freedom of personality. The fishermen heard the call, and truly free in God, at once left the nets and followed Him, also the sons of Zebedee not spearing themselves intended to serve Him, so they left their father and followed Christ - the Source of life. Thereof, the Church of God, my beloved, as a living organism of the body of historically revealed Christ, exists as a guardian and guarantee of the life as gift and the freedom of personality. "If you please" are words that powerfully echoe,

particularity today in the world of the total-isms. Accordingly I believe they have echoed in this holy temple. And you have heard and accepted them with all your heart and all your mind. On your “if you please” depends, whether you have accepted them. The Church knows not of violence upon the personality. The Gospel’s logic of the heart does not exclude the logic of the mind, but it triumphs over it. The freedom would agree to be crucified rather than to crucify others. Freedom that crucifies transforms itself into its opposite, into tyranny. The real freedom knows not of violence. It does not lose the awareness that only using good methods you can achieve good. It is absurd to achieve good using violent, shrewd and malign methods. To encroach the methodologies of the civil world and still to live in the Church, - mildly said – is unnatural. Church of God vomits, from the metabolism of its theanthropic organism, the recognized foreign body.

One of the people who knew how to respect the gift of freedom and to receive the call from God, is the remarkable Orthodox saint from our age, the Metropolitan of Egina, Nektarios. Living in Christ he sang a hymn to Mother of God with joyous and repentant language of the great psalmist, king and prophet David. That hymn represents summery of the whole poetic experience of the Church. St. Nektarios sang this poetic and liturgical creation, according the ancient monastic principles: give blood-receive spirit! Imagine what feeling of freedom did he have when he was hymning. Is there a bigger freedom than the freedom of the holy martyrs in blood for Christ? “Holy Virgin” is a hymn translated into languages of the world, hymn sang and celebrated from the hearts of all Orthodox people. We are also lucky to sing the hymn translated into Macedonian language. The translation is adopted according the musical pattern of the ancient church, Byzantine slavic musical heritage. We, macedonians with this hymn of St. Nektarios also glorify the Theotokos, our mother. Unfortunately, not without obstructions caused by the most responsible person in this monastery - the abbess, beside the fact that it is a hymn which has power to

comforte and to make joyous the modern man, teared apart from the life problems brought by the spiritually wastated world. The hymn has power to encourage, to raise and to become impulse for new life in Christ. I beseach you, brothers and sisters, to learn it and to sing it in your homes, with all fire of the Holy Spirit.

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

Amen.

THE POWER OF BLESSING

Humanity represents a community of persons and nationalities. They are invited to become one, big and holy nation of the living God. God’s nation comprises each person, each family and each ethnicity separately. Retaining their identity, they are catholically hypostasized (personalized). Often times in the historical pace of God’s chosen people of the Old and New Testament, big and tragic allienations from the source of truth and life, from the cause of our life and from our life-giver - the three-hypostatic God - were taking place. We have experienced and still experience these allienations of man from God and of humankind from God as cataclysms, permanently memorized in the mind of the Church. They are caused by tectonic movements of internal, spiritual spaces of the hypostasized natures of man and humanity. Further on, wars, earthquakes, floods, fires, revolutions followed by diseases, famine, disasters and ecological catastrophes are happening in the world as a reflection and consequence of the inner happenings of man. And yet, all these by reason of denial of man to face the real cause for big misfortunes in the history of mankind. The Holy Gospel read today confronts us with the very answer of existential questions and challenges typical of modern man as well as of all human generations of all ages and epochs. Before considering the Holy Gospel, we

would like to point another big catastrophe. Man of rational and scholastic culture created it in the laboratory of the intellect. In the dawns of the new ages, a schism between religion and nature was produced, yet not without a help of philosophy and science. Consequently, in our century, philosophy and science experienced radical split. Their participation in the first schism returned as a boomerang. They experienced the doom of their sacrifice. The sorcerers of new paganism are offering a sacrifice. Pagans desecrate everything that is holy. Having declared God dead, everything is allowed to them. Lots of sanctuaries are erected and many blood sacrifices are offered. They switched culture from a cult of God into a cult of Satan. The world – already a rubbish heap - is too narrow to store the golden calves assembled by mangods. *Quo vadis homo?* Why we are telling all these? Modern man continues to count on the forces of his nature. Its energetic, graceful capacities are not never-ending. The technocratic civilization puts a mask. It becomes exhausted, spending itself irretrievably, without a renewal and multiplication. Anemic and powerless mangod, with an atomic bomb in his hands, conceals himself behind the mask of astonishing progress of mechanical technology, behind the expansion of huge economic and bank systems and behind political, ideological and philosophic systems exclusively determined by them. Whatever he does to comfort his life so as - with its easiness - to become a happy man, becomes an unbearable burden. His never-accomplished promises to prevent wars, hunger, poverty, death and to make everyone happy - became his mortgage. The opposite is happening. In the very beginning of the 21st century, wars, famine, diseases, death and disasters multiply more than ever. Do the rich, developed countries feel shame because of the millions of people who die of famine? What a madness! They are more interested in prices of products than in human lives. For that purpose, tons of food are thrown in the abyssal wombs of oceans. Because of the “dead God” and gracelessness, the Soviet Union - once economically powerful - was and still is the very country of hunger in

the world, although it used to be the biggest world granary. Why is this so? How comes this paradox? What has happened to man? On one of my visits to Vojvodina, a bright, old and experienced farmer said to me: “Father Stefan, in the times when we ploughed with horses we managed to plough all the soil and to reap the abundant harvest. Now, having tractors and modern mechanization for cultivating, we could not manage to plough the soil and to collect the harvest that God gives us”. But why? He gave me the answer: “In the times when we ploughed with horses, our priest used to bless the soil prayerfully pleading blessings for abundance of earthly fruits by our living God. God was giving us strength and wisdom to gather and accumulate the plentiful harvest in healthy barns in order to sate our bodies and souls”. The point by our wonderful peasant from Vojvodina is the point of today’s Gospel, as well. We forgot our God, my brethren, and declared ourselves gods. We build an idolatrous relation towards ourselves and towards each product of our hands. “Be humble, proud man”. Could we continue our historical pace to the last judgment (eshaton) without God? It is certain we could not with the power of our muscles and without fracturing the bones of our mind!

We saw today, my beloved Christians, our all-kind and philanthropic God who fed five thousand men, without considering wives and children. The sun was setting and they went hungry. The words and the closeness of the Savior to them were sweeter than honey. The apostles got worried about the gathered people. They were hesitating whether to send the people to go and find food in the town. All day long, they were following Christ and were spiritually nourished by his divine mouth with redeeming and life-giving words, but their bodies were hungry and exhausted. Christ asked the disciples if they had something to give them to eat. They answered: “All we have are five loaves and two fish”. Christ took the five loaves, thanked God for them and broke them; he repeated the same with the fish and ordered the disciples to distribute the food to the people. It is said in the Holy Gospel

that people ate and were satiated and the disciples took up fourteen baskets of what was left over. This is God's blessing. Our fathers were not insane; they could not go to bed nor get up or start a work without a blessing, prayer and cross. Come, my beloved, return to God and to the living dialogue and communication with him. Let us pray an abundant and ample blessing for a new start and fulfillment of every good deed in our life.

Amen.

ON FORGIVENESS

The Holy Gospel read today, substantially, reveals the character and mentality of fallen man. Christ narrated to his disciples a wonderful parable about a mighty and famed king who decided to check on his servants' accounts. When he began to do so, one servant was brought in who owed him 10,000 talents. Since he did not have enough to pay his debt, the king ordered him to be sold as a slave, with his wife and his children and all that he had in order to pay his debt. It is written in the Scriptures that the servant fell on his knees before the king and begged him to be patient till the day he would pay him everything. Strongly touched, the king forgave him the debt and let him go. How joyful are the fruits of mercifulness and philanthropy! But, what happened with the excused servant afterwards? He went out and met one of his fellow servants that owed him 100 pennies. What a lunacy! He grabbed and choked him forcing to pay back what he owed to him. His fellow servant fell down and begged him to be patient awhile. But, he refused and threw him in jail until he would pay the debt. Other servants, who saw what has happened, embittered and horrified by the behavior of their fellow, went to the king and told him everything. So, he called the evil servant and reproached him severely: "I forgave you the whole amount you owed me, just because you asked me to. You should have had mercy on your fellow-servant, just as I had mercy on you". The king got angry and

gave the servant to torturers until he should pay back the whole amount. “That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart”- Christ concluded at the end of the parable. Thusly will be treated by the King of glory those who would not find a strength of love to forgive the sins of their brothers. The message is exceptionally powerful. It shakes our being to the bottom of our heart and wakes our Christian conscience about our relations to our brethren in Christ. Have we created, because of God, a moderate climate in our hearts, a climate of strong hope and firm confidence towards all our brothers? Do we have strengths to achieve the message that Christ announced in the Holy Gospel? Are we prepared to forgive our brothers and plead them to have mercy for our transgression? Since, only thus we can receive a place in the heavenly city, our eternal fatherland.

My dear parents and children, a new school year begins tomorrow. As a priest and a parent, I prayed God together with you to bless our children for a good start of the school year and to bestow them strong spiritual and intellectual strengths so as to meet both the school obligations and parents’ expectations. I also pray God to save the hearts and minds of our children with love and wisdom from the evilness of despair, drugs, alcohol, lechery and aimless nightlife in cafes and nightclubs. May the holy God save them from our atheistic school system, which till now did not cease to murder Lord Christ in their hearts. Our school system produces unique janissaries, a kind of children we do not want to be “produced”. As Christian parents, we want our children to love God, since the one who knows to love God will truly learn to love his brethren and himself. Let us pray God to bring to reason our authorities and those responsible for our school system to stop killing Lord Christ in the hearts of our children.

Amen.

GOSPEL'S MAXIMALISM

Holy Gospel read today, faces us with the wonderful dialogue between certain young man and the great, real Teacher of all, our Lifegiver, the Theanthropic Christ. The young man obviously – well-bred and theocentricly directed, came up to Christ with the words: “Good teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” Christ was delighted by the young man’s wisdom. What should has he done to be saved? Christ asked: “Why do you call me good? No one is good-except the One God alone.?” What condition, keeping and fulfilling of the Law required from him, to enter the eternal life? Fulfilling the ethical principles of life living in God, received on the Mount Sinai from the Saint prophet Moses, brings to the front of the doors of divine Parousuia. To refresh the young man’s memory, Christ enumerated the commandments: “Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honour your father and mother, love your neighbour as yourself”. The young man heard all what he had kept since the youth. Thus, he asked: “What do I still lack?” Then Christ apophatically led him out from the Law of the Old Testament and brought him into the Law of the New Testament: “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me”. This Gospel’s maximalistic attitude made the young man sad, as he had great wealth.

Gospel’s maximalism puts the real possibilities of a man on test. So we heard: the wealth and the addiction to earthly possession disabled the young man for perfect life in God. However, what had happened to the young man from the Gospel comes over to every man in general. Man ties himself up to this world through subjects, through money, through fame, through power, through fear from death and external aesthetics. However, in favor of passability of the things, that we have tied our selves up to this world,

sadness of a man gets deeper without possibility of healing. Christ faces us with the limits and the expiry dates of all that carries the seal of this world. The worm of death and the worthlessness bites it and eats it. It is passable and changeable, rotten and malodorous. Nevertheless, we have pathologically, tied our selves up to the mortal. We ignore the issue of our eternal existence in God. Yesterday, burial of a princess happened. In the London's cathedral "St. Paul", the archbishop of Canterbury, mentioned not once in his funeral sermon, the terms eternal and eternal life. Everything was reduced to sheer moralism and etiquette, glamour and attraction. The death was hidden behind the luxury of the elite and among the four walls of the pantheon of the immortal mortals. The atmosphere was typical and characteristic for the courts culoars, politic and cultural elites and jet -sets of the movie and musical mega stars from the stage, who are oppsed by themselves, by their own beauty and fame. Egoists and narcissists permit existence of God as much and as long as He will stay absent from the life of the world and history of man. In order to remain sovereign masters of the word, their anthropotheic majesties kill God or invent gods handcrafted and dead. They have repeatedly crucified, spitted and mocked at Christ, the God. Who wants and knows how to enter in the history of humankind, God, Who loves and knows how to co-suffer with the sufferings of man, God crucified and resurrected, Who shares the destiny of man and the world, - such God is unnecessary as: "He interferences too much in the human matters". Therefore, even if He does exist, let Him exist on the other side of this world. Do not Sartre, their teacher, teach them - If God exists, the man is not free? Freedom without God is freedom without limits and responsibilities. Sheer anarchy. They need life without any moral scruples: to be free in order to possess and to fulfill everything is wished for. Therefore, when we hear the words: "Go home, sell everything you have and give to the poor, then come, follow me", exactly as the young man from the Gospel, we strongly become sad. Christianity is "interesting" as far as it is intellectually

speculated, - and Christian theology as far as it is technology and inflation of words. However, theology that does not have any meaning for life - converts into mythology. We live and we search for miraculous formula for easy life, but the investment that overcomes the whole life of a man, becomes difficult for us, without remain. Are we familiar with - the denial of ourselves the passionate and the denial of ourselves the self-loved, in order our personal life to become the life of our brother? Does anybody in our life, teach us to behave like this? Did not our parents stop teaching us this? Maybe the street teaches us this? Do the institutions of the state, responsible for this, teach us all this? No my dears! We live in deep amnesia, or with short memory, “we are dead, yet alive”. We are living dead men, painted tombs, smooth from outside, pampered, adorned, but inside empty and wretched, we are dead and we lament deads. Therefore, the call heard today from the Holy Gospel, may it be the call directed to all of us, to recognize our self from inside, according to the visionary eye of the Spirit. It has to be sharpened, purefid, sanctified and transfigured by fast and prayer, confession and repentance, by drawing ourself near the Holy Chalice, where from we receive Christ, crucified for us and for our salvation, for the life of the world. Let us repay Him, with co-crucifing ourelves on His crucifixion, and cross bearing with every crucified neighbor of ours, all over the world.

Amen.

THE SECRET OF TIME

May the joy of the Church New Year be upon all of us. The fathers on the First Holy Ecumenical Synod catholicly decided to celebrate the start of the Church Year on the first of September. Jews, God’s chosen people of the Old Testament, considered September as a start of a new civic year. In September, the fruits were being collected and a sacrifice of gratitude to

God was being offered. In Christian history, September will be remembered because of the victory of Constantine the Great over the enemy of Christ's faith, Maxentius. After this victory, freedom of confession was given in the Roman Empire. For a long time in the Christian world, the civic year was considered a Church Year, beginning on the first of September. Thereafter, it was shifted to the first of January, firstly in Europe and then in Russia of Peter the Great. It is not randomly that this day coincides with the celebration of a great combatant from ancient Syria, the great stylite of Christ's Church, Simeon.

Pious Christians, time is a created category. Both time and space are created. These categories determine the cosmos. God blessed people to live in it. Living in time and existing in space, we save the time of our life. Saving it, we save the time as a whole, as a creation of God, as a gift by and a result of the divine creative powers and energies. Therefore, my beloved, the responsibility of man for time is immense, indeed. Living in the Church, man is asked to save each and every moment of his life. Living in time, we are to transform it into eternity. Thusly, transforming the time of our life into an eternal time of eternal life, we are invited to transfigure the total time and to make it eternal. We are invited to consecrate the time of this world, the historical time, since time is also invited to enter the timeless dimensions of liturgical time of the heavenly kingdom, the eternal city of Jerusalem. Therefore, my beloved, whenever you attend the holy liturgy and step over the threshold of the holy temple, you leave the time of this world and enter the time of the eternal city. Eternally prepared Eucharist awaits us there. Sitting around the table of life and truth, we eat the food of living life, drink the life-giving water and eat the bread of life, that is to say, our daily bread, as Christ said in the Lord's prayer. Whenever we leave the temple after the Eucharist, we return and enter again the time of this world. That is why the first object of Christian faith and action is the time of this world. Time represents an icon of our fundamental reality, of optimism and pessimism,

of our life as life and of life as death. Via time, we experience life as a possibility, as a growth, as a fulfillment and movement towards future. However, via time the future ends in death and devastation. Despite the fact that time itself is an unstable reality, it is the only reality of life. Time continually moves life in the past, which is gone, and to the future that always leads to death. We will picturesquely imagine life as a line of electric pillars strained towards the horizon. Our death awaits us on one of the points on our way. My beloved, the Holy Gospel read today carries the following message: all people from Adam till today should become inhabitants of the heavenly city, persons who saved the time of their life, but their life - entirely, that is to say, themselves as persons and the time of this world. It is obvious that time is an inclusive form of our life. Modern psychiatry speaks of the quenchless wish of man to escape the inevitable consciousness about death. To live in time means to face permanently this ephemeral world. The absurdity of life is at hand unless something does not appear to surpass it. We have heard from the Holy Gospel that there are people who violate the gift of freedom and humiliate its meaning by refusing to enter the happiness of eternal life. Today, from this place, we invite you and your Christian conscience to enter and sanctify your life and the time of your life. In that case, the grave becomes a door through which life is passing to build an eternal and unbreakable community and communication with the living and everlasting God.

Amen.

CANAANITE WOMAN AND DOSTOYEVSKI

Holy Gospel read today, faces us with an axial moment of spiritual living. The main character, the hero of today`s Gospel, Cannanite woman having a demon-possessed daughter stood before Christ begging Him to

help her. Christ, as if did not pay attention to her. It seemed He wanted to get rid of her. Yet, she ignored that persistently staying in His proximity, begging Christ to have mercy upon her daughter. Then, His disciples came to Him urging to help her, as they admitted, her persistence was difficult to be heard. Christ accepted dialogue with this wonderful woman. He answered: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." Then the Canaanite woman addressed miraculous words to Him, that were valid for her and her time, but also valid for every one and every people throughout all times, and ages: "Yes Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters` table."

All because of us, Christ allowed her to confess her faith ultimately, although He knew what kind of person was she. It would be according to her heart, Christ told her, as her faith was so great and amazing,. And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

But, what is the axial moment for the life of man from today? The humbleness, my beloved, that the Canaanite woman expressed before Christ. She approached Him as real humble woman, who did not ask anything according to her merit, but everything after the mercy of the One, Who is the reason of our existence, of our life.

From the people of the new age, the Great Russian writer Dostoyevski had come to the level of humbleness of this biblical woman. Knowing the pride of the man and because of this pride the unspeakable alienation from God, Dostoyevski recommended the man: "Proud man, humble!" - humble before your God, humble before your brother, humble before yourself, and everything that you really need, it will be given to you and nothing that you daily need will not be taken from you. This is the message of the Holy Gospel. Opposite to Dostoyevski and the Canaanite woman, many prouds - whose number is unknown, through the mouth of another Russian author, Maxim Gorky, in his crescendo - cry: "Man - how proud does it sound? ". They built totem from man - god without God. Man without God should

have solved the existential issues and problems in the world. Man anthropotheicly understood should have brought happiness to the little man - subdued to the proud man. Enslaving the brother, his transformation into servant and his blood represented price too expensive for the happiness of a mankind. May God deliver us from the philanthropy of the misanthropes. May God grant us the humbleness of the Canaanite woman and may He gift us energies so that we realize the saying and the request of the Feodor Mikhailovich, in purpose to be saved from the unnecessary sacrifices, in this world and in this century.

Amen.

MISTERIA TREMENDUM

Lex credendi (law of faith) teaches on humbleness and obedience. Faith and obedience teach us to render the law of love modestly, offering all our life. May we enter the joyful world of Pesach life! May we pre-taste the immortal life, the life that defeated death! God is our life. The Holy Gospel read today powerfully talks about that.

At the very beginning, the Scriptures face us with an exceptionally dramatic scene. Christ approached a distressing and tragic funeral procession at the gates of a small Palestinian town of Nain. Young man was being buried, the only son of a widow. She was accompanied by many fellow citizens who went out and gathered around the catafalque of the young man, truly lamenting his untimely death. She was broken hearted. She moved overwhelmed by sorrow. She suffered as much as she loved. Since she loved him immensely, she suffered immensely. Christ, the only real heart-seer, with his theantropic eye, saw and recognized the tragedy that happened in her heart. Therefore, he approached and asked her not to cry. Afterwards, he came near the catafalque and ordered the dead: "Young man!

Get up, I tell you!” The young man got up and began to talk. The Lord of life, the one who has a power to give and take life, stood before the young man. My brethren, life itself is holy and miraculous. The bare life given by God is our precious treasure. All the rest is but a result of that life, something that could be owned but it is not a must, something we can live without. For, you could have everything, yet you could lose everything. If we save life, we have everything and saved everything. Modern man is a prisoner of a consuming society. He lost his joy and devoted himself to objects without a control. He ceased to sing. Overwhelmed by struggle to possess goods, he lost his happiness. Hyper-production of objects, intended to ease man’s life, turned this planet into a trash heap. Man is confronted with a serious ecological problem. Eugene Jonesko, one of the prophets of this century, with a good reason called this world a requisitorium and this epoch of civilized and cultural development – a civilization of objects. Numberless and insignificant discoveries prevented man to build a ladder of values and to find a meaning. Our Roma brothers more often become a hagiographic paradigm to modern and wealthy man in regard to valuing bare life. Shall we learn to rejoice in our life, given by God, and start to sing again? Shall we cease blaspheming and accusing God for whatever lacks we have? Romas, living in a tent, under the open sky, along a riverside or a highway or under a tree, do not stop singing and rejoicing. What has saved them from the incurable sorrow and absurdity caused by inevitability of death? Beyond doubts, a modest life and a purity of heart! We do not advocate an anathema to the technical civilization, but would like to see it spared of abuses. After this digression, let us go back to the Holy Gospel. The dead man returned to life. He experienced his personal Pesach. Christ, the real lord and governor of world and life, endued with a great joy the heart of the mother and of the inhabitants of the small city of Nain. However, the joy was followed by a holy tremor of their souls and hearts. Misteria tremendum means blessed state of the spirit incited by the victory

of life over death. It is said in the Scriptures: “They all were filled with fear and praised God”. Having tasted the communion with the power, holiness and glorious joy of resurrected life, they praised God. May God abundantly grant you all gathered here with such a joy. Leaving this holy temple, may you share with all your brothers the joy of the young man delivered from death to life.

Amen.

INHABITANT OF EDEN

Saint John, the great educator of man’s heart, was chrysostomically transforming his life into a living word. He had and still has a spiritual power to penetrate profoundly in the essence of man’s being and personality and to transfigure them spiritually. In one of his sermons, centuries before contemporary European sociologists, he said: “May be condemned he who first in the history of mankind said: this is mine”. After this typically socio-economic phenomenon, humanity was divided into social and economic categories. Following that line, we reach to the global division into two categories: rich and poor.

The Holy Gospel read today pervades into the core of this crucial problem of human interpersonal relations. Our savior Christ Godman, surrounded as usual by his wondrous disciples, narrated the following parable. One man, rich and dressed in purple robe and silk was feasting daily in luxury. He led a dignified life and was short of nothing. He had idolatrous point of view and enjoyed in lechery. Before his gates laid a poor man named Lazarus, all covered with sores. He hoped to eat the bits of food that fell from the rich man’s table. Only the dogs would come and lick his sores. As God blesses our birth from the womb of our mother so he blesses and lets every man, in his time, to be embraced by the womb of the earth.

That has happened with both of them: the rich and the poor. When poor man died, angels carried him to sit besides Abraham at the feast of heaven. Afterwards, the rich one died and was buried. Lazarus knew why he was suffering. He apprehended the meaning of suffering. He was living in this world in resemblance to righteous Job. He joyfully carried the cross of his life. Therefore, he became a holy inhabitant of Eden, of the eternal garden of Eden, of Eden of the eternal and never-gloomy kingdom of three-hypostatic God. The rich one became inhabitant of tortures, inhabitant of hell. There was a cry and grinding of teeth. He looked up and saw Abraham, patriarch of old Israel with Lazarus at his side. So he called out: "Father Abraham! Take pity on me and send Lazarus to dip his finger in some water and cool my tongue, because I am in great pain in this fire!" The answer of the forefather confirmed the permanent ontological chasm between the dwellers of Gehenna and those of Eden, the holy dwellers of the eternal and heavenly city. "Remember, my son, that in your lifetime you were given all the good things, while Lazarus got all the bad things. But now he is enjoying himself here, while you are in pain. Besides all that, there is a big pit lying between us, so that those who want to cross over from here to you cannot do so, nor can anyone cross over to us from where you are". Thereafter, the rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus to his "father's" house and his five brothers in order to warn them to stop leading a life that will take them to the place of pain. However, Abraham gave him a hopeless answer. Abraham, the most just patriarch, gave an answer valid for all people and for us: "Your brothers have Moses and the prophets to warn them; your brothers should listen to what they say". The Scriptures comprise rules of living in this world. If we do not want to hear the voice of God in the Scriptures, if we do not want to put into practice - with all our freedom and love - the principles of living in the holy Church of God, witnessing and resurrection of dead and their annunciation of truth would be in vain. We would not believe. Hence, as for the notice of the rich, that his brothers would repent

only if the dead would come to them, Abraham said: “If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone were to rise from death.” Indeed, my beloved, only in the domain of absolute freedom and in the part of pure love the real God-seekers will crown themselves with the purpose and meaning of existence. We know that no miracles, no enchantments and witchcraft, nor the fake promises of worldly powerful people and of whichever and whatever world power and association that exercises violence over personalities and nations - can bring happiness to man. Nevertheless, let us go back to the plea by the rich man addressed to Lazarus to dip his finger in some water and quench the thirst in his mouth. We know, my beloved, that paradise and Hades are not geographic but spiritual notions. They are not and must not be materialized. Neither fire nor water can be found there. Both fire and water symbolically present the spiritual state of man’s fall and alienation from God. God is a source of life-giving water and a charismatic fire, a fire that burns but never burns up. Estranged from him, hungry and thirsty, we die for a drop of life. The cry of the rich man is a cry for a drop of life. The life-carrying springs of the holy and life-giving Spirit, who bestows abundance of grateful powers and energies, are pure waters of life. Without them, my dears, nobody can tell he is alive, truly alive, even when he biologically and physiologically functions. In such a case, he functions as a dead in the laps of this world, a world transformed into a crypt. Therefore, my beloved, let us strive with a good struggle and drink the water that poor Lazarus was drinking. Let us not permit thirstiness and passion for wealth to quench our thirst and hunger for God. Let us celebrate the living God! Let us graft on him so as to have his spiritual flux flow and feed our living organism of spirit, soul and flesh. Watered and nourished by the water and bread of eternal life, may we win an eternal existence.

Amen.

THE WORLD OF THE DEMON-POSSESSED MAN

Holy Gospel read today, is a powerful sermon and testimony about the host and the master of this world, the Creator of this world, the incarnated Word of God, the Theanthropic Christ. As He is the master of the world and the age, of the people and all creatures, He has power and authority to command the demons, those tempting beings of the non-being, whose power is mortal. At His command, the abominated father of death Satan, leaves the conquered spiritual space in the human personality. Therefore, let us recall the content of the today`s Holy Gospel.

Christ came in the region of Gerasenes. Here he was met by two demon-possessed men, who had lived in the city tombs. The citizens did not dare to pass on the way through tombs. The demon-possessed were dangerous to their lives. Christ dared, what the citizens could not. The demon-possessed said to Christ: "What do You want with us, Jesus, Son of God? Have You come here to torture us, before the appointed time? Let us go into the herd of pigs." Christ commanded them: " Go! ". The demons came out of the men, they went into the herd of pigs. The pigs, after they had received the legions of demons, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. The two demon-possessed were cured. The spiritual health came back to them. The peace and tranquility imposed their rule again, over their interior, but also over the region of the Gerasenes. Nevertheless something unexpectedly happened. Then citizens went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, without words of gratitude for the miraculous curing, overcame with fear for the miracle pleaded with Him to leave their region. This proves, my dears, that is true there is not a single problem which would be really posed if we ignore the bravery and the risk that provoke tremor of the mind, the soul and the heart. The man is an unsolved, mysterious being. In good - ascended to God, in evil - headfirst to

demon. Deified as homo homini deus, and demonized as homo homini lupus. An brutal contradictory is built in the human nature. Beloved! In the syntagm "There is no God, there is no immortality, there are no demons " - man appears as an autochthonous carrier of eternity, and his eternity is a basic creative energy of the world`s and life`s philosophy. The name of that power is - devil. Hence, my beloved, the statement- we live in a world drastically hell-made and demonized -is precise. We identically perceive the demon spirit in the personal as well as in the social life. The demonic energy misteriously spreads throughtout the whole being of man, and indiscernibly stick as a tick to the tissue of the soul. The features of the soul are slowly conquered. Then, unconsciously, man feels the demonic power as a part of himself, as a content of his own self-knowledge. In the thoughts, feelings and the creative life of man, the demonic energies participate quietly and unnoticeably. Lacking to be detected as strange and violent. The demon would have been extremely stupid if it had presented itself as Mephistopheles to Faust, with thundering and noise. We are familiar with the primordial shrewdness and the fascinating rationality of devil and the world build by it. The dwellers of its world are numberless variants of spiritual vassals, lackeys and janissaries. Oh Lord, save us, and deliver us from the frightening pandemonium, from the disgust and pride of the physically and metaphysically deformed monster - the devil! We recognize its killing spirit in the read Gospel. Once more we conclude, only the faithfulness towards the Theanthropic and His Church, and the readiness to live and to die for Christ - can save us. Since, who dies for Christ, dies for eternal life. Not to repeat the mistake of the people who live without Christ and out of Christ. They live for eternal death. God grant us not to be membered in this part of humanity.

Amen.

FOR THE DEMONOCRACY

Last week we have experienced in all His prowess- the Theanthropic Christ as the Master of life and world, as the Gift-giver of the life and the greatest Healer of all our physical, psychic and spiritual weaknesses.

Today, the Holy Gospel opens another, new dimension in seeing the Theanthropic personality of Christ. Today Christ has proved Himself not only as a real Master of the life and the world but also - as the personality before Who solemnly trembles every created creature and every created personality filled with faith and knowledge for the real presence of God in the life of people. Today we have learned about the antitheism of the fallen demonic beings, the black angels. They are beings of the non-being, deflected from God, and the fact that are primordially created from God tells that they know that God exists. At very mentioning of His name, they tremble from fear, knowing that the Master of the world and life has power and authority above every creature. The power of love and the power of truth protect the man from demons. Holy Gospel speaks about Christ, Who went to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across Galilee. He met a man from the town, who was demon-possessed for long years. This man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice: What do You want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You do not torture me!” For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. The power of the demonic forces was inconceivable big. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. Their comfort was the impulse of the demon-possessed to live in solitary, arid and mortal spaces. His most favorite living spaces were the tombs. During the meeting, the demon-possessed was standing,

trembling and confessing His Theanthropic name. He confessed that Jesus is a Son of God -the Father. He was begging Him to have mercy upon him. Then Jesus asked him: "What is your name?" "Legion" he replied, because many demons had gone into him. He had become a mean into their hands. They had completely governed his inner spaces. When Christ had commanded the evil spirits to come out, they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. The subjects of their wishes became the large herd of pigs feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and He gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they run off and reported this in the town and countryside. A lot of people gathered. The terrible man, the man of the demons -become humble, in his right mind and conscious sitting at Jesus` feet. The view amazed the people and they overcame with fear. Then all people of the region of the Garasenes asked Jesus to leave them. The cured demon-possessed man was begging to go with Christ. But Christ did not allow him. He sent him away advising to return to his home and to testify about the miraculous healing. Christ, that very moment got into the boat and sailed off the region of the Gerasenes.

One of the topics from today`s Gospel is about demonocracy, undoubtedly, colossal and maybe truly unique topic of our time. The demonism, from the very beginning is worn in clothing of the angel of light. Its medium are credulous. In this moment, my dears, comes to my mind the great French poet Baudelaire. In his book *Flowers of evil*, led by the poetic intuition, he signifies the morbid truth: the greatest triumphs of Satan to convince people that not God, but it - the devil - does not exist. The uncovered evil and violence always hide behind the mask of goodness and freedom. My beloved, the biggest witness is the age we live in. The crucial ideas and ideals, that have deceived many with their aesthetics and

goodness, gave birth to the fruit of manslaughting evil and unprecedented violence. The evil is the ingenious virtuoso of the fashion and fashion designer. In the Egyptian pathericon is said how abba Makarios the Great had seen Satan in the desert, carrying innumerable pumpkins hanged around its neck. Abba Makarios asked it: "What are you carrying?" It replied: "Various food, for every man according to his desire and taste". Therefore, our people rightfully say: "better to be alone than in bad company". Beloved brothers and sisters, Christ is always with us. Christ is always with us as a parent, better said as a mother, who is always beside her child. Equally mother watches over the life of her child, growing him from her womb till the majority, her eye and all her senses follow every sigh, every step of her child, as Christ the God stands beside us, following us, following watchfully, guarding over our hearts. Sometime probably in the childhood, all of us were lonely and frightened of solitude provoked by the absence of our mother. Thus lonely, it happened to fall, to injure our self and disconsolately to devote our selves to weeping. Yet, always when we felt presence of our mother and her wonderful, warm, maternal words: *do not be afraid, my son, I am with you*, - the weep disappeared, and the fears were expelled. Exactly, Christ the God, present always in our life, stands by consoling us: "Do not be afraid, I am with you".

Amen.

THE WORLD OF OBJECTS

Today's Gospel, as every word of God, is marked for everlasting and immortal contents. For instance, Christ told His disciples and the people around Him the wonderful parable of the rich man and his land that had produced a good crop. In the simplicity of the Gospel's parable, deep unforeseeable contents and messages are hidden, addressed to all

generations of Christians. Let us hear the content of the parable. The field of a certain rich man had produced a good crop. The man was deeply worried, as he did not have a place to store his crops. Then he decided to tear down his old barns and build new ones, with a capacity big enough to store all his grain and goods. After he had done this, he lustfully said to his soul: "My soul, you have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."

The rich man from the Gospel is paradigmatic to the state in which the man of the modern world has fallen. The man of today, as the rich man from the parable, is exclusively devoted to the physical bread and his own passions. Giving himself completely to the physical bread, he is giving himself to this world and the lusts, remaining forever hungry and with empty barns. The modern man commits constant violence against himself, tirelessly repeating the words of the rich: "Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." The man strives towards the hedonistic life personified in the formula: "take everything that the life offers you."

The Orthodox ascetic anthropology notes a deformation of the human natural being into the unnatural state and inner deformation of the world, which is conditioned by this. The ecological environment influences the depersonalization of man. We have poisoned the rivers and we have killed the fish in the rivers. We have polluted the air in our rush for wealth, and we have killed the birds. We have poisoned our souls with spiritual smog. It is made monstrously ugly and gasps, burdened by sins and life-threatening diseases. We face death, unless the rhythm of the natural and the historical time transforms it in the rhythm of the divine time. Immense consumer's wealth is followed by a confusing moral and religious poverty.

At the peak of his wealth, man does not know how to behave. Like a child spoiled with piles of gifts, the man of today is caught in a trap of the objects. He is obsessed by the objects he possesses. And exactly because of this abundance of objects, he becomes less attached to the objects. Just as

his car, not a single object can last long, and needs to be replaced with a better one. Nothing is lasting anymore. Then a question is posed: “What is all this wealth for, what am I going to do with it?” The end of the parable offers the answer to the posed question. Let us hear.

God said to the rich man: “You fool! This very night your life will be taken from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is how it shall be with anyone who stores up things for themselves but are not rich with God.”

My beloved, this simple story contains the whole eternal truth about us and our existence in this world. When we hear these wonderful words of sobriety, these faith-awakening words of Christ, and when we look at ourselves through this optics, we come to realize that the greed of the man from the Gospel is the greed with which we live publicly or secretly. We live our lives according to these rules. Yet, this kind of a life is strictly egocentrically directed. This kind of life is closed to the man as an individual who creates his own world, failing to recognize the existence of other worlds.

How good would have it been if the rich man had said: ”Lord, You have given me more than I need! I know that there are people who are suffering, lacking what I have in abundance. I will give them the surplus, in Your name and in Your glory, my Lord. For, undeservingly I was given more than I need. Oh how wonderful it would have been if the rich man had been taught this! All Gospel sayings contain the message: “grant the poor and weak the surplus from your hearts.” By this we will show readiness - not with word, but with all our life, with all our mind, with all our heart and our deeds: that we have loved the Lord, our God, and our neighbor, at least as ourselves.

Amen.

THE WORLD OF IDOLATRY

Today's Holy Gospel is truly wonderful. It penetrates the corpus of the social issues and problems. To employment issues and employee's attitude towards the self-called masters of the world, towards the food and clothes - men of this world respond by idolatry. It is extorted by the man of this world. It is a pagan worship of leaders of this technical civilization, of bankers and usurers, of states and statesmen, and of owners of large industrial corporations. Their deification is patterned after the old pagan civilizations and cultures. The syndrome of the Golden Calf, i.e., idolatry, happens whenever men and peoples deflect from God and interrupt the unity and communication with our living God. Refusing in their labor to ascribe glory to the Holy Three, they become slaves to stone-carved idols - numerous personality cults in the worlds of culture, politics and business. These masters have convinced us and have also assured themselves that without them we are going to starve to death, that we are going to freeze naked. We are told to be still alive, breathing the air, solely thanks to their charity and humanity. They have buried the unique philanthropist deep in the underground of their being, in the name of the pseudo-humanism. Yet, today we have heard from the Scripture how Christ taught his disciples, and all of us through them. Do the birds of air plow, sow and reap? Does not God feed them!? Even Solomon, in all his splendor, was not dressed more extravagantly than the lily flower. Did the lily labor, did it spin, did it sew? The message is clear and comprehensible. It is impossible to serve two masters, God and Mammon. Unanimously, consciously, with all reason, modesty and nobility, peoples glorify and worship the Creator of the universe, the Creator of life, the Maker of man and all living beings on this planet Earth. In particular, this refers to statesmen and leaders. Above all, they need to offer glory to God and teach us all how to glorify the Father of

life and the Gift-giver of all that is good. The concern over food and clothing comes after this. What does God tell us about that? Beyond all, we need to worry about the Heavenly Kingdom and fulfillment of God's justice. Only after this should we be concerned for our body and its needs. And if it is so, my beloved, we are left with nothing else but bowing our heads before the Lord, and, in all humbleness, overcoming our pride, our egocentrism, to recognize and glorify the living God. Only then shall we be granted life-giving and creative energies for making every good deed, and only then shall we return them back to Him, multiplied with gratitude.

Amen.

ON GOD'S TEMPLE

Our dear children, we are very happy that you came together with your teacher in the temple of holy Theotokos. This is a temple of all citizens of the world, a home of the intercessor of all people and entire humankind, the Mother of our God, the incarnated Logos, Theanthrope Christ. The question about the necessity to come in the holy temple was naturally imposed today because of the presence of your angelic and chaste childlike beings. The purity of your souls and hearts, the chastity of your minds, the clearness of your eyes, body and spirit became our challenge and therefore we shall speak about the educational character of the Orthodox temple and the holy liturgy. We elders have undergone, like you are still – unfortunately - undergoing, a capricious educational system, which is tendentiously made to be ideological and political to the extend of militant atheism and secularism. There is no room for God in the school system of our country. Christ is thrown away from our schools. Our teachers have crucified Christ again in the attempt to kill him in yours childlike hearts. Without parents' permission, they take the children and educate them in a way that their

parents do not want them to be educated – in an atheistic spirit. Do they not become janissaries *sui generis*? On the other hand, our school system misunderstands the term education. It refers to the forming and developing of intellectual abilities by nourishing (educating) the mind with knowledge, that is to say, with information. Due to huge influx of information with rational origin, child's brain becomes a barn, depot or encyclopedia stuffed with knowledge. That would have been acceptable under one condition: if man had been but a brain, i. e. one-dimensional being. We know that man is not only a brain, but a heart as well; he is not only a body, but a soul as well. Man has eyes, ears and tongue as well. This refers both to his physical and spiritual nature. He should recognize, feel and taste our living God with them. Afterwards, with such an experience, man should witness and teach about God. My dear children, today you saw that Christ was offered to everybody and - being tasted by all of us - was recognized as kind, unique and real God. When we enter the holy temple, its educational role captures all ontological layers of our personality and all gnoseological instruments for recognizing the truth. Whatever the holy temple consists of - it educates man and all his personality. Let us start with the wonderful architecture of Orthodox temple; then let us mention the frescos and their colors; the saints painted on the walls of the temple; the holy icons, the holy iconostasis; the chanting, that is to say, the church music; the smell of incense, the priest's vestments and his sermon; the reading and chanting of liturgical poetry; the arts, the philosophy and the Eucharist of the Church – all aiming to teach and educate the mind, the heart, the eyes, the tongue...The very term “obrazovanie” (education) originates from the old Slavic word “obraz” (image), which has as its analogy the image of God. The term “vospitanie” (moral upbringing), too, comes from the old Slavic word “vospitati”, which means to be nourished. We agree with Foerbasch that we are what we eat. If we eat the earthly bread, which turns into an excrement, we are but a dust; but if we eat the everlasting bread, which transforms us into graceful

godmen, we are but dwellers of Eden (Edemits, paradise people) and nothing else. Once more, I would like to say how pleased I am to see you here, besides the elders. You are the future of the holy Church and of our Macedonian Orthodox nation. I plead you to visit this church often. May Christ and his Mother be with all of you.

Amen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Father Stefan Sandjakoski, docent at the Faculty of Theology in Skopje, was born in Struga on September 3rd, 1956. The spiritual and intellectual climate in his family, particularly the notable works in the field of philology and musicology by the family patriarch, archimandrite Kalistrat of Zograph, will play the main role in the process of shaping of his personality. He graduated at the High school of mathematics and science in Struga, then enrolled at the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade. He completed the studies on February 18th, 1983. During the studies, he was awarded two significant awards: *Dr. Radivoj Josich Award*, in the field of apologetics; *Best-graduated Student Award* of the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade. With a recommendation by the Staff of the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade, he had a six-month visit to Mount Athos, where he studied the language of the Byzantine fathers of the Church. During - 1985-1988, he attended the postgraduate studies at the Institute of Orthodox Theology St. Sergey Radonyeshky in Paris, where afterwards he presented a thesis in the field of patrology and ascetic studies. Subject of his research was *Apothegmata Patrum*, the codex of monks' apothegms from Egypt, from the 4-5 century. His mentor was Prof. Olivier Clement, a former student of the eminent French existentialist Jean Paul Sartre.

In 1990, he was elected a lecturer by the Holy Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church at the Department of patrology and ascetic theology with Christian ethics at the Faculty of Theology in Skopje. In

1994, he became and still is working as a docent at the same Faculty. In 1995, he defended the MA dissertation *Prolegomenon on the Research of the Orthodox Byzantine-Slavic culture of Macedonia*. In 1997, he defended the doctorate dissertation *Apophatic Philosophy of Corpus Areopagiticum* at the Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. His mentor was Prof. Georgi Stardelov, a member of the Macedonian Academy of Science and Arts.

Father Stefan Sandjakoski has a relevant knowledge of Hebrew, Old Greek, Latin and Old Slavic. He speaks French, Russian and other Slavic languages. He is an author of above 60 scholarly works published in Macedonia and abroad.

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